

## God Yet Speaks from Sinai and Calvary, to Zion

Exodus 19:1-8, Sunday after Ascension

May 24, 2009

Beloved of the Lord.....Some of us today are news junkies, namely we check the internet daily so we can get the latest in news. I learned this week that the House passed the hate crimes bill, which has the potential to outlaw preaching against the sin of homosexuality. Likewise same-sex marriage was recently legalized in Iowa, and there are those who want the same for Minnesota. How long before they attempt to force ministers to marry such couples? Clearly if things continue on their present course, we will assuredly be persecuted for holding true to God's Word. That is why we must pray for our government, "for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty." While tomorrow is indeed a good day to be thankful to God and those who have defended our religious freedom, let us yet rejoice today that our ascended Lord is yet King of kings and Lord of lords. Rest assured dear believer, from the highest heaven He yet rules and governs this entire earth in the best interest of His Church.

But since these days are evil, "Even so, come Lord Jesus." In one way it is good when the days are evil, for it causes our sinful hearts to separate our affections from this world, that we might lift up our eyes to heaven anxiously awaiting His return. He has promised to come and judge both the quick and the dead. Forty days after His triumphant resurrection on the top of the Mount of Olives, Jesus visibly ascended up into heaven and "a cloud received him out of their sight." I've always like the part where the two angels suddenly appear and admonish the disciples who are yet gazing up into heaven. They said, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven!" In other words, "Go on and get busy with your work! He will return again soon enough, but in the meantime there is much to do!" May we likewise brethren be busy in the work the Lord has called us to do. Jesus said, "He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." Even so, come Lord Jesus!

I. God's Words from Mt. Sinai. In our lesson today, "Moses went up unto God, and the Lord called unto Him out of the mountain." Moses hadn't reached the

summit yet when God spoke to Moses from the mountain, Mt. Sinai. God's message for His people was this, "Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people: for all the earth is mine." Notice the conditional statement, IF YE WILL OBEY AND KEEP, followed by the promise THEN YE SHALL BE a peculiar treasure. This is a preaching of the law to God's people, with a promise attached that only believers receive. God's language here is similar to the beatitudes of Christ. "Blessed *are* the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy." God desires that we be merciful, for we have obtained mercy through Christ. While the Israelites were commanded "IF YE WILL OBEY my voice, AND KEEP my covenant", it was the knowledge that through the Seed of Abraham they were to God a peculiar treasure, which moved them to obey. While there is only one God above all people and nations, for God says "all the earth is mine" - believers alone know the True God by faith. "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." It is because we know Christ, that we obey His Ten Commandments in faith, in love. I John 2:3 says, "Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments." After Moses relayed God's Word to the people, we notice they vowed, "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do." This is the response and vow of faith. When we know the voice of our Good Shepherd, we are happy to obey. David said, "O how love I thy law! it *is* my meditation all the day." Ps. 119:97

Continuing now with our text, in verse six God said, "ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests and an holy nation." This is the spiritual priesthood of all believers: namely through Christ God counts believers as an holy nation so that we are a peculiar people, a treasure unto Him. Just as He is our treasure, so we are his treasure, bought and paid for with His own blood. Because we love Him, we look for "that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." When the Holy Spirit reminds us that we are God's chosen and elect people, even the apple of His eye, faith works by love. We become zealous in good works and love not only in word, but in deed and truth. We also happily obey the Great Commission of our ascended Lord: "Go ye therefore and make disciples of all nations."

We make disciples of all nations by the preaching of two mountains. When we preach the law, we preach

Mt. Sinai, the Ten Commandments and God's wrath and fury against all who break His commandments. "By the law is the knowledge of sin." We show people that we, all men, are in the sight of God wicked and miserable sinners. By our lust, greed and abusive words toward our fellow man, we deserve only God's wrath and eternal anger, which is hell. We remind people that if they wish to live upon Mt. Sinai, that is if they wish to save themselves by the Ten Commandments, they must obey all ten perfectly with a pure heart of love for God - and anything less is an abomination to God. Finally we remind all that God will indeed return and judge even the secret sins of men and those who refuse to repent will be eternally damned. Thus we need to help the secure sinner see that he is presently living on a volcanic mountain in the middle of the sea which is about to erupt with all of God's wrath and fury! To those who were secure in their sins, even Jesus said, "Except ye repent, ye shall likewise perish."

II. God's Words from Mt. Calvary. But at this point then, let us switch mountains. Let us through our words present to the hearer another mountain, namely Mt. Calvary, that green hill far away where our dear Lord was crucified, who died to save us all! The Bible says, "God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved!" Christ then is the satisfaction, the payment for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world! You see dear believer, you as a priest of God do not live on Mt. Sinai, but you live on Mt. Zion. Yet from Mt. Zion you can see those desperate and lost sinners yet living on Mt. Sinai - yet you have the means, you have the bridge to get from there to hear. Mt. Calvary is that bridge. When Christ preaches from Mt. Calvary He is not saying *Thou shalt* and *Thou shalt not!* Instead Jesus is saying, *Fear not, I have done all, I have paid your price, you are free, and He that believeth on Me is not condemned.* The Gospel places no conditions at all upon the sinner. It simply declares all condemned sinners free through the blood of Jesus Christ.

III. God's Words for Mt. Zion. When you then preach the Gospel of Mt. Calvary to your neighbor, from the ocean of despair will rise up another glorious mountain, called Mt. Zion. They will see Christ in all His glory shining like the sun at the top of this glorious mountain, and they will see that all who live there have peace with God and one another. By the power of the Holy Ghost in the Gospel, it just might be your neighbor crosses that bridge from one mountain to the

other. When the Gospel of Mt. Calvary is preached the heart of the sinner essentially says, "You mean all I have to do is believe that Jesus has already done all through the cross? Do you mean to say that Jesus through Mt. Calvary has already forgiven me all my sins?" When we answer YES, it might be the scales of unbelief will fall from our neighbor's eyes, and suddenly we will find our neighbor no longer live on Mt. Sinai, but look here he is now a new creature standing next to me on Mt. Zion! Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace good will toward men!

Mt. Zion then is the True and Invisible Church, that peculiar nation of God's chosen people. At the summit of Mt. Zion, the clouds of heaven touch the earth, for there is Christ, True God and True Man, our ascended Lord, the Living Word. Through His Word He leads and directs those who live on Mt. Zion. We need not lie upon our bed at night and wait for some special dream or revelation in order to hear Christ speak. We hear Him speak every time we open our Bibles, or hear in church the readings of our bulletin. In that Lutheran Hymnal in front or beside you, in those blessed written and sung words, you will hear Christ singing to you His words of comfort and grace. Likewise when Christ speaks through those "Moseses" of our day, our troubled heart will find peace. Moreover God is so good and gracious that even when we cannot make it to church, Jesus brings His grace to our home. A fellow believer, a spiritual priest may come to you and support you with God's Word, or a called servant might administer to you God's Sacrament wherein Christ gives you His heavenly manna, His body and blood, "given and shed for you for the remission of sins."

Finally, we then who dwell on Mt. Zion, are much like Moses who was climbing the mountain when He heard God speak. We have not reached the summit yet, but we can see it from here. As we continue our climb, our struggle to our heavenly home, Christ the Living Word daily speaks to us from above saying "Thy sins be forgiven Thee and heaven is your home." With His encouraging Gospel our hearts ascend and are lifted up, and we patiently wait for life everlasting. Let us then brethren, never forget that our ascended Lord yet fills and rules all things. We have seen what God did to the Egyptians, and we will likewise see the bitter end of God's enemies on the Last Day. But as for you dear believer, God will continually bare you up on eagles' wings and bring you to Himself. He will deliver us from evil! Even so, come Lord Jesus. Amen